

**WAY BACK WHEN: LOOKING BACK IN HISTORY**  
Happenings in the Cookeville area as recorded in the pages of the  
Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN.

By Bob McMillian

1990's

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**1990's**

(January 4,, 1990) Cookeville is named the "most affordable" city in a survey of 269 American cities by the American Chamber of Commerce Research Association. Somerset, Ky. was number two on the list.

(February 16, 1990) Putnam Clean Commission director Myrna Estes says she thinks Putnam County is finally ready for a full-fledged recycling program. In a weekend recycling event, more than 2,100 aluminum cans and nine tons of newspapers and magazines were collected, along with two dump trucks full of plastic jugs and glass bottles.

(February 28, 1990) James Blaske, 52, a military veteran who often sent rambling letters to the newspaper claiming he was the victim of a vast conspiracy, is held in the slaying of Jackson County postal carrier Wayne Grimes. Grimes has just delivered a letter to Blaske's home when Blaske shot and killed him, officials say.

(March 15, 1990) Accused murderer Michael Bush is ruled mentally incompetent to stand trial for the slayings of Richard Dow 17, and Jodie Lafever, 79. He told psychiatrists in evaluations that he has an invisible evil twin who talks to him and that men in black did the killings.

(March 27, 1990) A powerful blast levels the popular Sword & Stein dinner club on Bunker Hill Road. There was no smoke spotted after the blast and it was strong enough that the blaze was out when firefighters arrived. It is later determined that natural gas built up in the building after closing and that it was somehow ignited.

(May 2, 1990) Former Cookeville policeman Bill Gibson wins the District Attorney General's race in a landslide victory over Assistant District Attorney Marshall Judd. He is unopposed in the August general election.

The election also put Red Lamb, a former employee of the Putnam Road Dept. in the Road Supervisor's seat.

(May 13, 1990) In a press conference at Capshaw Elementary School, former Cookeville Mayor and State Rep. Dwight Henry announces he is seeking the Republican nomination for Tennessee Governor. O'Henry candy bars will be his calling card with voters.

(May 27, 1990) Sycamore Church of Christ is spearheading an ambitious and historic campaign to fund the mailing of more than 100 million brochures to every home in America spreading the gospel message.

(June 5, 1990) City merchants say they're going to crack down on young people cruising on South Jefferson Avenue and parking in their parking lots. They say it's costing them customers.

(June 8, 1990) City Manager Barrett Jones is resigning after two years at the helm in city hall following strained relations with members of Cookeville City Council.

Former Putnam County Executive John Gentry is named to the post two days later.

(June 27, 1990) Dwight Henry says his campaign for the GOP nomination for governor has raised only \$75,000. He says his campaign is going dormant until the August election to cut costs.

(August 3, 1990) Cookeville City Council, upset at rate hikes and complaints of poor service by Cookeville Cable Vision, votes to look into the possibility of the city offering its own cable television service.

Jamestown did it recently and it's working, said councilmen.

The council votes to send questionnaires to 10,000 electric department customers to gauge public interest in a city-operated cable business.

(August 26, 1990) A little known unit headed by Clarence Richards, of Cookeville, the Tennessee Defense Force, steps in to fill the void being left by members of the Tennessee National Guard who are being called to Saudi Arabia in the massive military buildup to oppose Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

The TDF, composed mostly of older veterans, will perform basic Guard functions until the hostilities cease.

(September 13, 1990) Saddam Hussein masks are hot items this year for Halloween masks as the massive military buildup in Saudi Arabia continues. Convoys of National Guard units passing through Cookeville along I-40 have become a common sight. Some are met with hundreds of citizens waving flags in a show of support.

(October 26, 1990) Joshua Clinton, the six-year-old whose fight with a failing liver sparked an unprecedented outpouring of love and support to raise \$250,000 for a transplant, died today in Pittsburgh during a 12-hour surgery.

It was his third in recent months.

(November 7, 1990) Gov. Ned McWherter gets 60 percent of the votes in his bid for reelection against Republican nominee Dwight Henry.

## **1991's**

(January 19, 1991) Iraq is facing a midnight deadline to withdraw from Kuwait or face the wrath of a multinational military force arrayed against it. On Tennessee Tech's campus, hundreds gather at a candlelight prayer vigil. In the early hours of the morning, more than 1,000 sorties by Allied warplanes begin to pound Iraq's capital. The air war has begun.

(February 14, 1991) The mother of Marine Brig. General Richard Neal, the man seen by millions in televised daily briefings giving the latest news from the Gulf War, lives in Baxter. Lois Neal says she hears from her son regularly, but doesn't talk much about business.

(February 24, 1991) Rallies of support, prayer vigils and other outpourings of concern here precede the ground war against Iraqi, in which 700,000 allied troops roll up and force back 545,000 Iraqi defenders and retake war-ravished Kuwait.

(April 25, 1991) Cookeville General Hospital, in step with growing concern over the harmful effects of second-hand cigarette smoke, bans smoking in most of the hospital facility.

(May 15, 1991) TTU gets the short straw in state funding cuts to Board of Regents colleges. The state is withholding 7 percent of TTU's \$32.6 million budget. MTSU will only have 2 percent of its budget withheld. TTU says the state's funding formula is unfair.

(May 30, 1991) Coach Wayne Shanks leads his Upperman High baseball team to seize the state championship in their division in Murfreesboro competition. It is the first TSSAA championship for Baxter.

(June 12, 1991) Services were held this week for John R. Mott, 71, who died at his home in Florida. He became a newspaperman in 1940 and in 1954 founded the Cookeville Citizen. In 1960 when it moved into the same building as the Putnam County Herald, he stayed on as co-publisher until selling his interest in 1968, when the two papers formally merged into the Herald-Citizen.

(June 19, 1991) Cookeville City Council votes to proceed with the extension of Neal Street west across Jefferson to South Willow in two phases to cut traffic congestion in south Cookeville.

(June 21, 1991) A new Cookeville council is elected. Harold Jackson is mayor. Seated on the council are Steve Copeland, Joan Tansil, Bill Ogletree and Don Wagnon.

(July 5, 1991) Japanese beetles make their first large-scale appearance in Putnam County, eating most foliage in their paths. Lures seem to be the best deterrent and soon, thousands of trash bags are full of the bugs all across Putnam County.

(September 6, 1991) The council approves a \$1.9 million physicians' office building at Cookeville General Hospital to help with doctor recruitment and better serve the public.

(September 22, 1991) Cookeville's new Krystal drive-thru restaurant breaks a record for the national fast food chain here. In its first week, 96,966 of the little square hamburgers are sold here.

(November 7, 1991) The Algood Recycling Center is doing a booming business and county officials say it's likely going to meet its goal to keep 16,000 tons of waste cardboard out of the Putnam landfill each year.

(December 8, 1991) Jack Phillips, owner of Phillips Shoes and other businesses in Monterey, is elected mayor in his race against John Henry Bowden, getting 474 to 191 votes. Phillips was vice-mayor in 1988. He says a new home for Monterey city hall is one of his top goals.

(December 13, 1991) CHS band director Dean Mayes resigns following allegations that he had illegal sexual relations with a former student. There are no criminal charges filed. The statute of limitations has expired.

(December 15, 1991) Peggy Say, whose persistence helped free Associated Press reporter Terry Anderson, her brother, from seven years of captivity in Lebanon, attends the graduation of her daughter, Melody, from Tennessee Tech.

(December 22, 1991) Cookevillians and the rest of the Western world breath a sigh of relief when Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev declares the Soviet Union dead after 50 years of dominating world affairs in opposition to the US. Boris Yeltsin is to be the new president of Russia, one of 12 new republics.

## **1992's**

(January 3, 1992) The Putnam County Commission names Nancy Boman as the new Election Registrar here following the retirement of Emogene Andrews, who served in that post here for many years.

(January 5, 1992) Services were held this week for former Cookeville Mayor Jack Mann, 85, who lead the city through a charter change while in office from 1960-63 as Cookeville went from a three-man commission to a five council form of government.

(February 10, 1992) A fire on Westside guts the Lord's Kitchen rescue mission and spreads to Security Finance, threatening the Darwin Mall before Cookeville firemen put out the blaze.

(February 12, 1992) District Attorney General Bill Gibson is successful in having accused killer Michael Bush reexamined and declared competent to stand trial for the murders of Richard Dow and Jodie Lafever.

(March 11, 1992) Former PE teacher Mark Gentry beats Putnam School Supt. Bob Hargis in the primary and wins that office, being unopposed in August.

(April 23, 1992) Cookeville General administrator Ralph Neff is fired by the board of trustees over the purchase of carpet for the hospital without bidding. He's been in that post for three years.

(May 15, 1992) Operation CityScape is launched by a group of volunteers headed by newspaper company owner Joseph Albrecht. It seeks to give a facelift to downtown Cookeville, drawing shoppers back.

(July 21, 1992) The Putnam County Commission votes to join Cookeville, Sparta and White County in creating a regional airport from the facility now run by Sparta and White County just south of Cookeville. The vote seals the fate of the Putnam County Airport just north of town, which has become hemmed in by growth.

(September 1, 1992) Cookeville High School parents in a special tour of the school say they're shocked at the condition of the school. Ceiling tiles are falling, wiring is exposed and the roof still leaks. They're asking the county commission to approve \$285,000 in repairs to the school.

(September 28, 1992) Hit by funding cuts for the last three years, TTU decides to give up its Tech Aqua center at Center Hill Lake and sublease it to the Upper Cumberland Human Resources Agency for use as a job training center.

(October 5, 1992) Mike Mayes, 52, CEO of Texoma Medical Center in Dennison, Texas, is named the new administrator of Cookeville General Hospital. He dropped by town anonymously the week before taking the job and talked to barbers, whittlers on the square and others and says he's impressed with attitudes here towards health care.

## **1993's**

(January 11, 1993) The Putnam School Board bans smoking in all Putnam schools. TTU is taking similar steps in campus buildings.

(February 21, 1993) A jury finds Michael Bush guilty of murdering Jodie Lafever and two days later, gives him the death penalty, four years and five months after the slaying.

(February 24, 1993) General Telephone and Electric moves all operators from a nine-state area to a central facility in Lexington, Ky. The shift takes 65 operator positions out of Cookeville.

(March 5, 1993) Cookeville City Council backs away from plans for a city-owned cable television system after legal questions arise. City Attorney Everett Falk says the new federal Cable TV Act makes the question moot. It should open up the cable television business to competition, he says.

(March 12, 1993) Richard Holt of Brentwood is the city's new police chief following the resignation of Bill Benson.

(March 14, 1993) A massive blizzard cripples the eastern part of the nation, shutting down Putnam County under three feet of snow and stranding dozens traveling Interstate 40. Area churches pitch in to provide emergency shelter.

(June 13, 1993) The Putnam Drive-in ends its last season after 40 years of business. its final film: "Death Becomes Her," with Bruce Willis and Goldie Hawn.

(June 28, 1993) TTU student engineers beat 55 other teams in Florida to take home the top trophy in the International Submarine Races. TTU has fielded an entry every year since 1989.

(August 27, 1993) The old Cookeville Planning Mills, now the offices of J&W Roofing, is destroyed by fire. It opened in 1912 here.

(September 1, 1993) After two year of planning and construction, the new \$11 million Putnam County Justice Center is about to open. It's a state-of-the-art facility replacing an overcrowded and worn out facility.

(September 9, 1993) The county is spending \$452,000 to install computers in the classrooms of 25 21st Century teachers to better prepare Putnam students to work in the computer age.

(October 4, 1993) James Ashberry of Allardt raises the world's second largest watermelon this year, weighing in at 176 pounds in the first World Pumpkin Confederation weigh-off at Allardt.

(November 18, 1993) Cookeville opens a new city park at Old City Lake. The 110-acre site includes trails, picnic tables and a boat ramp.

(December 14, 1993) Bucky Hatfield's farrier school at Bloomington Springs is named one of the top 15 blacksmithing schools in the nation by the Brotherhood of Working Farriers Association. He founded the school here in 1987.

## **1994's**

(January 4, 1994) Federal officials are still seeking Linda Ragland in the disappearance of a large sum from First American Bank here where she worked. Her husband, TTU football coach Jim Ragland, is seeking a divorce in the meantime and has sued her for \$309,000 he says she owes him. She is believed to be hiding in England. She's caught in Edinburgh, Scotland in July. The next February she's ordered to repay the \$2 million she stole and serve 57 months in prison.

(February 11, 1994) An ice storm leaves 8,000 to 10,000 UCEMC customers without power after trees and limbs come down all across the county under the weight of ice.

(March 20, 1994) Cookeville City Council approves \$1 million to house the Cookeville branch of the Nashville Technical School now housed in the old GTE building on Freeze Street.

(April 3, 1994) Services are held for Marshall Bertram, 88, a retired TTU professor known for his work with the Cookeville Kiwanis.

(April 11, 1994) Services were held this week for Cookeville's oldest physician, Dr. Thurman Shipley, who practiced here from 1933 until 1985.

(May, 4, 1994) Cookeville has become a film making center. Hollywood stars Sylvester Stallone, Sharon Stone, John Cleese and others are living here this summer for the making of "The Jungle Book" at Fall Creek Falls and "The Specialist" at Rock Island State Park.

(June 17, 1994) A new Cookeville Council takes office, with Jean Davis as mayor. On the council are Betty Vaden, Steve Copeland, Noble Cody and Don Wagon.

(July 19, 1994) Red Lobster Restaurant is the latest chain restaurant here on Restaurant Row (Interstate Drive) after Cookeville votes pass an historic liquor by the drink referendum. Chamber of Commerce officials say 500 new jobs have already been created by the boom.

(August 8, 1994) Services were held for Eddie "Jelly" Watson, 91, the man who brought prep football to Putnam schools in 1938, and who served as Putnam School Supt. in 1959. He also helped introduce Little League baseball here in 1984.

(September 20, 1994) The council votes 3-2 against selling Cookeville General Hospital after weeks of public debate and strong public opposition against it.

(October 7, 1994) The council approves a \$20 million expansion of Cookeville General.

(November 6, 1994) Former Citizens Bank CEO Charles Miller is found guilty of bank fraud and conspiracy in his second trial on the charges.

## **1995's**

(January 6, 1995) Services were held this week for former Cookeville Postmaster L.K. Mahler, who served in that post for 31 years until retiring in 1984. He was also active in the VFW on the local, state and national level.

(January 18, 1995) If Chattanooga's Erlanger Hospital goes through with plans to station a helicopter air ambulance in the Upper Cumberland, the Putnam County Commission says it can use the hangars of the old Putnam Airport as a base.

The county's airport operations are now based at the Sparta/White County Airport, which Putnam is helping fund, and the old airport property is unused.

But other commissioners said that, meanwhile, the county needs to look for an alternative site to offer Erlanger. The new Cookeville High School is being built on the southern end of the airport property.

\*Showing at the Highland Cinema this week: "Dumb and Dumber," with Jim Carrey and Jeff Daniels.

(January 22, 1995) Two Putnam women, Christy Burks and Michelle Bouton, were in Japan teaching English this week when a devastating earthquake struck, centered on Kobe, Japan, and killing more than 5,000.

Christy, the daughter of Horace and Jacky Burks, was 175 miles away from the epicenter in Nukata, Japan. Her worried parents finally got her call hours later saying she was okay.

Michelle's parents, Chip and Janet Bouton, knew there'd been a quake but didn't realize how severe it was until their daughter called and described the devastation. She was also alright but said she was awakened that morning by her bed violently shaking.

Both women are Cookeville High School graduates.

\*Showing this week at the Highland Cinema 10, Rudyard Kipling (and Disney's) "The Jungle Book," a live-action movie filmed in part at Fall Creek Falls Park.

(January 24, 1995) The city has a new fire chief today: Gene Schmid, a 12-year veteran of the department and a graduate of the National Fire Academy, specializing in arson investigations.

Scmid, a Cookeville native has been acting Cookeville Fire Department Chief since Billy Sliger resigned last fall.

\*Services were held this week for Len K. Mahler, a well-known former postmaster and civic and veteran affairs leader here.

Born in Baxter in 1919, Mahler served in the US Navy in the Pacific in World War Two and returned to become active in the Veterans of Foreign Wars unit communities across the U. S.

Mahler served as Cookeville's postmaster for 31 years and was at the helm when Cookeville's new post office was built on South Willow Avenue in 1977.

He's served in VFW leadership positions on the local, state and national levels.

\*Showing this week at the Highland 10, Walt Disney's "The Lion King."

(February 6, 1995) Area lawmen are concerned about a new kind of illegal drug creeping into the area – "crank"

Area Judicial Task Force director Bob Terry says the brownish powder is made in illegal labs and smoked or sniffed like cocaine, only it has a longer effect on the behavior of the user.

The results of a special census are in: Putnam County now officially has 55,751 residents.

That's a growth rate of 8.5 percent since the last census in 1990. The only other county in the Upper Cumberland with a faster rate of growth is Cumberland County, which is growing by a rate of 13.1 percent.

\*Showing this week at the Highland Ten Cinema, "Pulp Fiction," with John Travolta and Samuel Jackson.

(February 13, 1995) Steve Copeland, Noble Cody and Don Wagon, three of Cookeville's five City Council members, this week met privately and decided that Cookeville City Manager John Gentry had to go because they didn't like his "management style."

The two excluded members, Cookeville Mayor Jean Davis and Cookeville Vice-Mayor Betty Vaden, heatedly objected to the firing, saying it was a case of "good old boy politics."

And a group of private citizens got together this week calling themselves The Committee For Good Government and said they didn't like the management practices of the three councilmen. They're calling for their ouster.

Former long-time city manager Bethel Newport has returned to act as interim Cookeville City Manager.

\*Showing at the Highland Cinema 10 this week: "The Brady Bunch Movie."

(February 17, 1995) Councilmen Noble Cody, Steve Copeland and Don Wagon, meeting in a closed-door session, decide to fire City Manager John Gentry, saying they don't like his management style. Three days later the public outcry forces them to reconsider and Gentry returns to his job.

(February 19, 1995) Last week, three members of Cookeville City Council in a secret meeting fired City Manager John Gentry, a former Putnam County Executive and city manager here for four and a half years. This week, facing a standing-room only crowd of his supporters, the three reversed themselves and reinstated Gentry.

Steve Copeland, who said he was speaking for himself and councilmen Noble Cody and Don Wagon, told the crowd, "We hear your voices."

Showing this week at the Highland Cinema 10: "Legends of the Fall," with Brad Pitt and Anthony Hopkins.

(March 1, 1995) Cookeville General Hospital plans to spend \$369,000 over the next two years bringing the facility fully into the computer age, officials there announced this week. Helping extensively with the rewiring process will be the local telephone company, Citizens Telecom.

\*Meanwhile, Gov. Don Sunquist released his proposed state budget this week and it shelves plans for a \$9 million Cookeville Technical Training Center long sought here.

State Sen. Tommy Burks says he remains optimistic. He notes that all new capital outlay projects were put on hold by the governor, and feels certain the center which is now housed in a rented building on Freeze Street will one day be a reality.

(March 8, 1995) Retail sales in Putnam County topped \$673 million last year, according to latest figures. They totaled \$302 million in 1984.

(March 9, 1995) The Michelangelo Virus that computer experts have been warning about<sup>5</sup> has hit the Cookeville Police Department's computer system. Luckily, the department had kept security updated and damage was minimal, police officials say.

Experts have been warning personal computer users that the virus would activate on computers it infected on March 6, the birth date of the famous Italian artist and namesake of the virus. Once active, it destroys data needed to run the computer's hard drive.

\*The Putnam School Board this week voted 3-2 that John Steinbeck's classic, "Of Mice and Men," can be taught in classrooms here.

The issue began last fall when a father told School Supt. Mark Gentry that he didn't want his son reading the Steinbeck novel, which was required reading in an honors class. A committee reviewed the book and this week, the board voted on the question.

Many here complained pulling the book from the reading list was censorship.

(March 16, 1995) Cookeville General Hospital is seeking state approval for a \$3.5 million cancer treatment center at the hospital, part of a \$20 million expansion targeted for completion this summer.

The center will make it considerable more convenient for cancer patients who now go to Nashville or Knoxville for radiation or chemotherapy treatments.

\*Showing at the Highland 10 Cinema this week: Paul Newman in "Nobody's Fool."

(March 25, 1995) Descendants of Tennessee's first families are being sought for special recognition during Tennessee's bicentennial next year.

The East Tennessee Historical Society is taking applications from state residents descended from anyone living in Tennessee in 1796 or earlier. So far, the society has collected 1,400 applications.

The first name on the list? George H. W. Bush. The former president is related to Jonathan Weir and William Gault, early residents of Blount County.

\*Showing this week at the Highland Cinema 10: Tom Hanks in "Forrest Gump."

(March 29, 1995) In recent years, a group of Putnam residents working in Nashville has pooled rides and left cars parked at Baxter/Gainesboro exit off I-40. Now, so many are doing it that the intersection is in danger of becoming congested with parked cars.

This week, the Tennessee Dept. of Transportation announced plans to create a parking area there to accommodate up to 40 cars for commuters.

\*A candlelight virgil was held here this week to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War.

One of the organizers, Doug Bates, said, "We want to help heal the nation and especially the Vietnam veterans who for so many years have kept a low profile."

Bates was a combat medic in the Mekong Delta in 1969 and 1970.

(April 5, 1995) Congressman, Bart Gordon is fighting in Washington to keep a variety of students financial aid programs that are on the cutting board under Newt Gingrich's "Contract With America" campaign. Gordon met with TTU officials this week to discuss his efforts to save work study, student loan subsidies and other forms of aid.

He said 25 percent of the nation's college students receive financial aid of some sort, 70,000 of them in Tennessee and 1,000 of them at TTU.

(April 9, 1995) Local computer users will soon be able to log onto the Internet with a local phone call for the first time on April 17 when Multi-Net, an affiliate of Randolph and Parks here, goes on line.

(April 13, 1995) The Putnam School Board has named the new elementary school being built on West Jackson Street "Cane Creek Elementary." Opening this fall, it's the first school due to open in a \$50 million project that includes a new Cookeville High School on the site of the old Putnam airport.

(April 13, 1995) Wayne Shanks has been named by the school board as the new principal of Upperman High School.

(April 19, 1995) There's a new traffic "cop" in town. Cookeville police are testing a portable radar speed detector that shows in large letters how fast cars that pass it are going under a speed limit reflecting the allowed speed.

Police believe it will be worth the \$13,000 price tag and they're asking Cookeville City Council to fund it in their upcoming budget.

\*The death toll now officially stands at 36 in the Alfred P. Murrah federal building in Oklahoma City today. The building was destroyed by a massive bomb. Rescuers are still combing through the smoking ruins today.

Showing at the Highland Cinema 10 this week: Irish actor Liam Neison as the Scottish hero "Rob Roy."

(April 25, 1995) Leaders in the CityScape organization are working to convince Cookeville officials to expand efforts to spruce up the downtown area, and they say the first phase of the project is already reaping benefits for the city.

Gross retails sales in the project's Phase One area are up 30 percent for the year, says CityScape. The area includes the Square and Broad Street down to the Cookeville Depot. They note that sales were up \$33,000 for 1994 in the area even though construction on the Square limited traffic to businesses there for four months.

\*Showing at the Highland Cinema 10 this week: Martin Lawrence and Will Smith in "Bad Boys."

(May 5, 1995) The Upper Cumberland Regional Airport Board voted this week to invite Erlanger Hospital in Chattanooga to station a LifeFORCE air ambulance vehicle and crew to for fast evacuation of seriously injured patients.

If Erlanger accepts, the airport will spend \$200,000 to built a hanger and crew quarters at the regional airport.

\*Ground was broken this week on a new middle school in Cookeville. The school is yet unnamed and it is being built on the grounds of what until recently was Cookeville High School on Highway 70.

(May 8, 1995) The speaker for this year's TTU graduation was popular biology professor Gordon Hunter, known for his classroom characterizations of famous figures in science.

He spoke this week to 776 TTU graduates and their parents in a hat, white wig and tweed jacket, appearing as Dr. Linus Pauling winner of a Nobel Peace Prize for his opposition to atomic weapons. Hunter's message to the graduates: the secret to success is "You've got to care."

\*Showing at the Highland Cinema 10 this week: Pauly Shore in "Jury Duty."

(May 15, 1995) Dr. William Francis is this year's recipient of Cookeville General Hospital's Fred H. Roberson Award. Dr. Francis, a popular and well-known physician here, was honored for his commitment to his patients and to the hospital.

The LaFollette native was a paratrooper in the Korean War and got his medical degree from UT in 1961. He joined Cookeville General's staff in 1963 and became its chief of staff in 1985. He's now in his sixth year on the hospital's board of trustees.

Meanwhile this week, the ACLU is hosting a forum at TTU this week on the issue of book bans.

The forum is in reaction to an incident here earlier this year in which Putnam School Supt. Mark Gentry prohibited the teaching of John Steinbeck's "Of Mice and Men" in Putnam classrooms after a complaint by a parent.

A subsequent protest by parents and teachers persuaded Gentry to reverse the ban.

Showing this week at the Highland Cinema 10, "Matrix Reloaded" and "X-Men 2."

(May 23, 1995) After a wave of severe storms passed across the state this week, Hugh David Goff was standing in his yard on Austin Bottom Road near Baxter when he spotted a piece of paper fluttering down from the sky. His wife, Donna, joked "Maybe it's a check being dropped off to you."

It was. The piece of paper was a cancelled check written in 1980 on a bank in Lawrence County, signed by Randy Hill.

Donna mentioned the incident to a co-worker at Tutco the next day. The woman said Randy Hill was her brother-in-law. His home had been damaged by a tornado. The wind apparently carried the check from Lawrenceburg to Goff's home.

(May 30, 1995) Two ex-GIs met in Monterey this Memorial Day 50 years after they stood off a giant German Tiger tank with just their rifles.

Lonnie Maxwell of Monterey, 80, a retired logger, and Duward Lawrence, a retired postal worker, saw each other this weekend for the first time since the end of World War II.

At the end of WWII, their unit had pushed in Germany, undergone seven German counterattacks and a 27-hour artillery barrage, and had pushed into the ruined German town of Boslar when Maxwell and Lawrence found themselves facing a giant German tank through the window of a ruined farmhouse.

Armed with just their rifles, they stood their ground until others in their unit brought up a bazooka and took out the tank.

"It was a real bad time. I was just lucky I got back," said Maxwell.

(June 13, 1995) Services will be held this week for Tommy Thomas, 95, known here for biking all over town but known nationally for his music.

Born in 1901 in Braceville, IL, Thomas started drumming at the age of 14 and quickly rose to fame drumming for groups that backed up Benny Goodman, Judy Garland, Bob Hope and many other entertainment notables.

Thomas said in later years that he considered his greatest accomplishment having taught jazz great Louie Bellson how to drum.

He came here in 1965 as Tennessee Tech's first percussion instructor.

Showing this week at the Highland Cinema, 10, Bruce Willis in "Die Hard 3".

(June 15, 1995) Services are held for Tommy Thomas, 95, a professional drummer who played for George Burns, Bob Hope, Benny Goodman and other famous performers and who in recent years was well known for riding a bicycle around the town despite his advanced age.

(June 19, 1995) The Putnam School Board is asking for suggestions on what to name two new middle schools that will open here next year, one on Highway 70 on the site of what is now Cookeville High School, and the other on what is now the site of Cookeville Jr. High near TTU.

Many in Cookeville are pushing for the old junior high, which sits on the site of the former Central High School, to be named Central Middle, but Putnam School Supt. Mark Gentry says that's confusing.

Other suggested names for the two schools: Mountainview, Eastwood Middle, Raider Middle and Putnam Middle.

\*Showing this week at the Highland 10 Cinema, Mel Gibson in "Braveheart," and Val Kilmer as the Dark Knight in "Batman Forever."

(June 25, 1995) Putnam County's first quadruplets celebrated their first birthday this week.

When the babies were born last year to Robin and Donna Dixon of Baxter, each easily fit into the palm of their mother and father's hands. In a story in an edition this week, the Dixons said their babies are crawling now, squealing for joy and competing for mom's and dad's attention.

The babies are Derrick, Dustin, Miranda and Savannah Dixon.

In a photo on page one this week, leaders of Cookeville Children's Theatre are getting ready for a summer production, "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat." The co-producers of the play, which will be presented in late August, are Kirby Hamilton and Gail Luna.

Showing this week at the Highland Cinema 10: Clint Eastwood in "The Bridges of Madison County."

(September 20, 1995) Cookeville has hit a new construction record — \$27.4 million in new construction permits issued through August.

(October 13, 1995) Services are held for Sam Smith, Putnam's Civil Defense well-respected director since 1976. He was known as a "class act in public service." He was 64.

(November 6, 1995) Jim Shipley, city finance director since 1983, is named City Manager by the Cookeville Council following the resignation of John Gentry.

(December 1, 1995) The council decides to take another look at the sale of Cookeville General Hospital just as the facility is about to try to sell \$10 million on bonds for new construction, a move that puts that sale under a cloud and again stirs turmoil.

(December 11, 1995) Jim Ragland resigns as TTU football coach, a post he's held since 1986. Mike Hennigan, defensive coach under Ragland, steps up to the head coaching position.

(December 17, 1995) State Senator Tommy Burks, getting no promise from the council to let the public decide whether to sell Cookeville General through a referendum, introduces a bill in the legislature forcing such a vote. Meanwhile, nearly a thousand hospital supporters join hands in a "Hug The Hospital" rally here.

## **1996**

(February 4, 1996) TTU settles a sexual discrimination suit filed by former music therapy teacher Lisa Summers for \$100,000. She was fired in 1992 after refusing to teach what she said was an unfair workload.

(March 13, 1996) Cookeville voters heavily favor an amendment requiring the council to put the sale of the hospital up for a public vote. The council now turns to investigating whether to lease the city-owned facility.

(March 31, 1996) Cookeville's oldest radio station, WHUB, is sold to Paxson Communications. WHUB-AM was opened by Luke Medley on July 20, 1940, and WHUB-FM was created in 1964.

(April 14, 1996) Known for his wit and integrity, federal judge L. Clure Morton says he's retiring and moving to Knoxville to live with a nephew. He's 80 this year.

(April 28, 1996) State Senator Tommy Burks has passed another resolution on Cookeville General Hospital, this one forcing Cookeville City Council to hold a public vote before it can lease the facility.

(May 3, 1996) The council votes to spend \$400,000 on a study on leasing the hospital, and eventually bills the hospital itself for the study.

(May 14, 1996) City Manager Jim Shipley fires Richard Holt as police chief, saying he has shown a lack of teamwork, and Bill Benson returns as Cookeville's police chief.

(May 16, 1996) The council votes to lease Cookeville General to Ft. Sanders Health Care of Knoxville, a \$140 million deal that hinges on whether voters approve the sale.

(June 26, 1996) The Olympic Flame, which is being run and walked across the country on its way to the Atlanta Games, passes through Cookeville, carried by Tracy Epps, Doug Faragher, Bill Geer, Andy Holbrook, Steve Mathias, Glen Johnson, and Jason Parrish.

(July 29, 1996) Sixty motorcyclists riding with no helmets in a caravan on the way to the funeral of a biker friend killed in a wreck here recently are stopped and ticketed for not wearing helmets by the Tennessee Highway Patrol.

(August 3, 1996) By a vote of 3,228 for, 1,328 against, Cookeville voters approve an amendment to the city charter requiring a referendum before the hospital can be leased.

(Sept. 6, 1996) A new school board "unapproves" the payment of \$47,000 by former Putnam School Supt. Mark Gentry for paint. The purchase should have been bid and was quickly approved by the outgoing board. An investigation is ordered.

(September 12, 1996) In office a week, Tax Assessor Byron Looper says he has made "a controversial finding." He says \$100 million in property in Putnam County is not on the tax rolls. The Putnam County Commission later that week says that is the normal backlog for property here and suggests Looper get back to doing his job and stop looking for controversy.

(September 15, 1996) TTU, wracked by budget cuts, says it will probably have to close the Appalachian Center for Crafts, a move that prompts an outcry here.

(October 13, 1996) A criminal court jury finds councilman Don Wagnon not guilty of trying to “fix” a ticket for an elderly constituent. He says he talked to the officer who wrote the ticket after the elderly man threatened to sue for mistreatment by the officer, but says he never asked that the ticket be dismissed.

(October 14, 1996) Services are held for Dr. William Francis, a popular doctor here and former chief of staff and chairman of the board of trustees at Cookeville General. He was 67.

(November 6, 1996) Voters by a narrow margin reject Cookeville City Council’s lease of Cookeville General to Ft. Sanders.

(November 25, 1996) The school board passes a “zero tolerance policy on guns and drugs in school. Any student caught with either is automatically suspended for one year.

## **1997**

(March 1, 1997) Services are held for Dero A. Darwin 96, a innovative merchant who in 1928 opened the first of several Jenkins and Darwin Bros stores in what would become a chain in Tennessee and Kentucky. He retired in 1970.

(March 6, 1997) Cookeville’s Leisure Services Dept. is about to open its new SportsPlex complex on West Jackson Street, a facility with four softball fields, and two soccer fields. The complex is built to accommodate regional, state and national tournaments and is expected to generate hundreds of thousands in additional tax revenue.

(March 9, 1997) Collegeside Barber Shop owner Copeland Jared is putting down his clippers after 50 years in the business. He’s retiring and closing his landmark shop.

(March 10, 1997) Services are held for former Putnam School Supt. Walter Warren Shanks, 70. He served from 1972-1984.

(April 21, 1997) A bank bag with \$6,000 in cash and \$130,000 in checks disappears from Putnam Trustee Gary Maynard’s office and an investigation is launched.

(June 11, 1997) A new \$175,705 library is rising in Monterey near the Standing Stone Monument. The new 2,100 square-foot center replaces a 300-square-foot area used for a library in the old Monterey Community Center.

(July 6, 1997) Prescott Central Principal David Little wraps up a successful year at that school and is named the new principal of Cookeville High in its first year in a sprawling new building. Former CHS principal Tom Parker moves to Cane Creek Elementary, and then moves back to Bristol, Va. just as school opens in August.

(July 9, 1997) The new \$25 million Jackson Plaza shopping center is nearing completion on West Jackson. With 270,000 square feet of retail space, including a new Sears, Goodys, Belks stores, the center is the largest in the Upper Cumberland.

(Aug. 31, 1997) Opal Sparks and her sister, Nellie Nichols, are ending 49 years of operating the Sparks Grocery on E. Hudgens, long a favorite place to buy a sandwich or after school snack for Capshaw Elementary kids. Mrs. Sparks opened the little grocery in 1948 after being laid off at the Cookeville Shirt Factory.

(September 12, 1997) Algood officials “find” an 800-acre area that was annexed in 1979 but tied up in lawsuits and forgotten. However, the suit seeking to block the annexation was dismissed in 1990. Today, Algood says the 210 homes inside the area are now part of Algood. There’s heated opposition and Algood officials eventually “de-annex” the area.

(September 14, 1997) The new 931 area code goes into effect in Putnam County. Parts of Smith and DeKalb County are now split between 931 and 615 codes.

(October 12, 1997) Central High's classes of 1930-36 hold their final class reunion. Some 160 show up at the final event.

(November 24, 1997) A new terminal building is going up at the Upper Cumberland Regional Airport, further improvements by the four-government board that oversees the facility.

(December 16, 1997) TTU's second winningest coach, Frank Harrell, is resigning as women's basketball coach at the end of the season. And Ron Chambers, CHS football coach for the last six years, is also resigning that post, but staying on at the school as a teacher.

## **1998**

(January 19, 1998) Known for his luck and his calm approach, as well as his ability to appear and disappear unseen, the "Rush Hour Bandit" pulls off his fifth area robbery, this one at the Bank of Putnam County in Monterey.

(January 21, 1998) Services are held for Joan Derryberry, widow of former TTU president Everett Derryberry. She was 91. A native of Devonshire, England, she came here in 1940 with her husband and became a leader in culture and the arts here.

(February 15, 1998) Seventeen-year-old Tiffany Taylor is found guilty of the stabbing death of her mother, Teresa Parramore, in 1996, and is given life in prison. Officials say she stabbed her mother to death after being caught and stopped trying to sneak out to see some male friends.

(March 1, 1998) Attorney Henry Fincher leads a drive to oust Putnam Tax Assessor Byron Looper for neglecting his office to follow his own personal political agenda.

(May 15, 1998) Byron Looper has his name legally changed in court to Byron "Low Tax" Looper, explaining that he wants voters to know where he stands on taxation.

(June 1, 1998) Park View United Methodist Church is struck by lightning and destroyed by fire. It was built in 1957 and expanded in 1965.

(July 5, 1998) Phase II of CityScape gets under way at Westside, where power lines are going underground, new decorative sidewalks are being installed and ornamental light posts are going up. The Cookeville Square got similar treatment in Phase I.

(July 26, 1998) Services are held for Luke Medley, 91, a visionary businessman and political figure who opened the first small-market radio station in Tennessee here in 1940 and who served as County Judge for 16 years, and Cookeville's mayor for two terms.

(August 3, 1998) Capshaw Elementary begins an experiment of year-round school. Classes will be held in 10-week cycles, followed by a three-week break.

(August 7, 1998) A new city council is sworn in, with Charles Womack as mayor. Councilmen are Richard Grogan, Dwight Henry, Steve Copeland and Harold Jackson.

(August 14, 1998) Angelo Volpe says he's retiring as TTU president on July 1, 2000, a 13-year stint as president only exceeded by Q.M. Smith, who served 18 years., and Everett Derryberry, who served 34 years.

(September 1998) R.V. Young, 51, a horse trainer from Sparta, is the Rush Hour Bandit, say officials. He was caught just after the holdup of a check cashing business in Sparta and police found the bandit's

trademark overalls in his possession. He's charged with a string of area holdups and robberies in recent months.

(October 19, 1998) State Senator Tommy Burks is murdered early in the morning on his farm near Monterey and Tax Assessor Bryon Looper, who's opposing him in the upcoming election, is missing and being sought in the crime.

The shocking murder of the popular long-time senator leaves the community in mourning and the bizarre case draws attention from the media from around the world.

Looper is arrested and charged with the murder on Oct. 23. Burks' widow, Charlotte, says she's mounting a write-in campaign and immediately receives the backing of both the state's Democrats and Republicans. Looper's name is still on the ballot.

(October 27, 1998) Champions fiddler Frazier Moss died this week at age 88. He was declared the nation's top bluegrass fiddler in competition in the mid-70s.

(November 4, 1998) Charlotte Burks beats accused assassin Byron Looper in a 20-1 landslide vote to take the seat of her former husband in the state senate.

## **1999**

(January 7, 1999) Board of Regents Chairman Charles Smith says that after months of behind the scenes debating, it's official now — the new \$11.3 million Cookeville Technical School will be built on a site on Neal Street in Cookeville.

(January 26, 1999) In jail in Crossville, Byron Looper is ousted as Putnam County Tax Assessor.

(March 17, 1999) It will cost Putnam County \$166,800 to prepare the county computers for the coming Y2K bug, officials say.

(June 10, 1999) Byron Looper offered \$1,500 to a childhood friend to kill Looper's mother, according to papers filed in an upcoming bond hearing on the accused assassin. Looper's bond stays at \$1.5 million.

(July 8, 1999) 200 residents sing hymns and carry signs protesting an appearance at Cotton Eyed Joe's here by the Chippendale males dancers.

(July 26, 1999) Services are held for the man who probably knew more minute details about local history than anyone else and who holds a record for the number of offices he's held or sought over the years, Joe F. Dyer. The feisty, opinionated Dyer was 82.

(August 5, 1999) Questions and later, chaos, surround the school board's murky new dress code policy, adopted in the wake of last spring's Columbine, Colorado school shootings. The board eventually revises portions of the code for clarity.

(August 18, 1999) Drug Task Force agent Richard Cobble is among the top ten agents in the country in terms of the poundage of drugs he's seized in stops on I-40. In the last five months he's found 2,100 pounds of pot and 7 kilos of cocaine stopping suspected drug transporters on the interstate here.

(October 27, 1999) Michael Carter, 18, and Arnold Clouse, 36, are held in a series of more than 100 arson fires in fields and forests in a four-county area.

(November 4, 1999) One of Cookeville's oldest industries, Red Kap, is closing along with other plants owned by VF WorkWear Inc, of Nashville. Some 260 jobs are lost here and 800 in all at the company's plants.

(December 3, 1999) Tobacco farming in Putnam County is in a serious decline following major lawsuits lost by the tobacco industry. The amount of tobacco raised this year is down dramatically, and so is the amount it is selling for.

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